

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, US, KS, KN, VN
SUBJECT: DISCUSSIONS ON EXCHANGE OF ROK DIPLOMATS CAPTURED
IN SAIGON

1. FOLLOWING DISCUSSION ON ANOTHER TOPIC LATE AFTERNOON JULY 19, THE FOREIGN MINISTE TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO BRIEF ME ON THE STATE OF PLAY ON NEGOTIATIONS TO AFFECT THE EXCHANGE OF NORTH KOREAN AGENTS NOW IN ROK PRISONS FOR THREE ROK DIPLOMATS CAPTURED AT FALL OF SAIGON. HE REVIEWED ROK EFFORTS THROUGH THE FRENCH ON THIS MATTER NOTING THAT THE END RESULT WAS A PROPOSAL FROM HANOI FOR A PRELIMINARY MEETING IN NEW DELHI BETWEEN REPS OF NORTH AND SOUTH KOREA AND VIETNAM. THEY HAD NOW HELD THESE PRELIMINARY TALKS AND AGREEMENT WAS REACHED TO HOLD A MAIN MEETING IN NEW DELHI BEGINNING JULY 22. THE AGENDA FOR THE TALKS WOULD BE FIRST THE RATION FOR THE EXCHANGE, I.E. HOW MANY NORTH KOREAN AGENTS FOR THE THREE ROK DIPLOMATS, THEN DISCUSSIONS ON THE PLACE AND TIMING FOR THE EXCHANGE.

2. THE FOREIGN MINISTER STATED THAT THE ROK WAS SURPRISED AT THE PRELIMINARY TALKS BY THE FACT THAT THE VIETNAMESE DID NOT TAKE A ROLE BUT LEFT THE DISCUSSIONS TO BE CONDUCTED DIRECTLY BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH. THE ROKG
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HAD HOPED TO HAVE TALKS WITH THE VIETNAMESE, LEAVING THE NORTH KOREANS IN THE BACKGROUND. HOWEVER, EVEN WITH DIRECT DIALOGUE THE TALKS PROCEEDED IN A BUSINESSLIKE MANNER.

3. THE PLACE FOR THE TALKS BEGINNING ON JULY 22 WILL BE THE NORTH KOREAN REPRESENTATIVE'S OFFICE IN NEW DELHI

AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVE WILL BE THE HEAD OF THE PEACEFUL UNIFICATION CONFERENCE CHO MYUNG-IL, WHO THEY CLEARLY IDENTIFY AS OF VICE MINISTER RANK. THE ROK HAD ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO APPOINT THEIR AMBASSADOR TO INDIA AS CHIEF DELEGATE TO THE TALKS, AS HE WAS A FORMER HEAD OF THE NORTH-SOUTH TALKS DELEGATION. THE NORTH KOREANS, HOWEVER, HAVE REFUSED TO ACCEPT AN AMBASSADOR SERVING ABROAD AND WISH TO HAVE THE ROK REPRESENTATIVE BE OF CABINET LEVEL. WHILE THE ROK POSITION IS THAT THEY CAN APPOINT ANYONE THEY SO DESIRE, IN THE END THEY WILL PROBABLY APPOINT FORMER VICE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND NOW AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO SWEDEN YOON AS THEIR REPRESENTATIVE. THEY UNDERSTOOD THAT THE VIETNAMESE WOULD ALSO SEND A VICE FOREIGN MINISTER, HIEN, AND IF THE OTHERS WERE REPRESENTED AT THAT LEVEL THE ROKG WOULD BE AS WELL.

4. I ASKED THE FOREIGN MINISTER IF PERHAPS THE NORTH KOREANS HAD OTHER AIMS IN ESTABLISHING SUCH A LINE OF COMMUNICATION SINCE OTHER FORA OF NORTH-SOUTH TALKS WERE NOW CLOSED. HE THOUGHT THIS MIGHT BE THE CASE AND WONDERED IF THE USSR MIGHT BE BEHIND THIS INITIATIVE TO PROVIDE ANOTHER CHANCE FOR DISCUSSIONS IN A NEW FORM. THE FOREIGN MINISTER STATED THAT HE DID NOT KNOW WHY THEY WERE INSISTING ON A VICE MINISTER HEAD OF DELEGATION BUT SAID THAT IF THE OTHERS DID THEN THE ROK WOULD HAVE CONFIDENTIAL

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NO CHOICE.

5. COMMENT: WE ARE SOMEWHAT INTRIGUED BY THE FACT THAT THESE TALKS HAVE EVOLVED IN THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY HAVE TO PROVIDE FOR AN EXCHANGE AT THE VICE MINISTERIAL LEVEL AND ARE PLEASED THAT IN THIS INSTANCE THE KOREANS ARE KEEPING US ADVISED, IF ONLY JUST, BEFORE THE FACT. WE WONDER IF THIS EXCHANGE MAY NOT BE A WAY OF SURFACING INITIATIVES BEGUN AT ANOTHER LOCATION EARLIER THIS YEAR.
GLEYSTEN

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